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ABSTRACT

The Regional Inservice Training Model (RIST-M) was used to develop a weeklong inservice summer training program at Idaho State University for professionals working with deaf and hearing-impaired students in rural Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming. There were several reasons for offering inservice training on a regional basis: a mission of Idaho State University is to be a regional resource for educators of the deaf and hearing impaired; federal and state laws require inservice education; and rural areas needed an economical model for providing inservice education. During the summer of 1994, the RIST-M was field-tested at the Intermountain Special Study Institute (ISSI) at Idaho State University. ISSI used RIST-M content, structure, delivery, and support factors to develop a summer inservice program for educators of deaf and hearing-impaired students. Seventy-one of the initial 84 participants completed a survey providing information about themselves and program evaluation. Participants were from primarily rural areas and worked directly in instructional settings in residential or public schools. Participants gave high ratings to five of the six inservice presentations and two of the three program activities. This paper concludes that a regional inservice program for rural educators is required to implement a quality program. In addition, the program should be a collaborative effort among state and local departments of education as well as institutions of public and higher education. Furthermore, the training should be relevant to the needs of professionals and should be of reasonable cost so that educators can afford to attend. (LP)

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ED 381 319

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REGIONAL INSERVICE TRAINING MODEL FOR PROFESSIONALS WORKING WITH DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS IN RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS.

Introduction

The continuing education of educators is necessary if they are to acquire new information and skills that will help them meet the needs of learners. This idea applies equally to professionals working with deaf and hard of hearing children. Unfortunately, the realization of this is complicated by the lack of available and accessible training. Furthermore, for teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, speech-language pathologists, educational audiologists, educational interpreters, and regular educators who work with students who are hearing disabled in rural areas, opportunities to acquire new information and skills are virtually non-existent. For them financial and geographic constraints are real and significant. Rarely is anything done to address the situation faced by rural educators of the deaf and hard of hearing and their specific training needs.

Purpose

This paper describes an inservice training model for professionals working with deaf and hard of hearing students in five intermountain states: Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming. Specifically, it describes the following: [1] the rationale for offering inservice training on a regional basis, [2] relevant research, [3] the Regional Inservice Training Model, and [4] a description of the Intermountain Special Study Institute. The paper concludes with some observations.

Rationale

The rationale underlying the Regional Inservice Training Model [RIST-M] is grounded in three realities. These are: regionalism, law, and economics.

Regionalism: The overall mission of the Education of the Hearing Impaired training program at Idaho State University is to be a regional resource to five intermountain states. Specifically, it offers pre-service training during the academic year, as well as during the summers, to individuals who want to become certified teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing. In addition, it assists state departments of education, local education agencies, and special schools in their efforts to fulfill federal and state special education requirements. Over the years this focus has expanded to include a commitment to working with affected parties for the purposes of increasing contact among professionals working with the deaf and hard of hearing in these rural states, promoting collaboration among service providers within and between these states, and enhancing the skills and understandings of those professionals involved in the education of students with impaired hearing.

Federal and State Law: As stated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (I.D.E.A.), regulation 300.322(b);

> ...states are required to have procedures and activities to ensure that teachers, administrators, and related service personnel may acquire sufficient knowledge derived from educational research and demonstrated promising practice...

This federal requirement, as well as accompanying state regulations, is part of the rationale

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underlying the regional inservice model. Furthermore, a regional or multi-state inservice training approach is an efficient and effective way to address this requirement.

Economics: States with dense populations are able to undertake this requirement within their own boundaries. States with sparse populations face the dilemma of participating in training activities in other states, or sponsoring their own training activities. With respect to the former, travel costs and other related arrangements drive up costs of such activities, thereby, limiting the number of individuals who can participate. The latter also has drawbacks; most notably, the financial restrictions sparsely populated states face in training activities that are of high quality for professionals involved in education of low incidence populations. An option for sparsely populated rural states is to collectively support an endeavor that will provide inservice training to professionals working with a low incidence population such as deaf and hard of hearing school age children and youth. Such multi-state support of this type will require a regional effort to provide inservice training that is sensitive to the region's educational needs, that advances the knowledge base and quality practices of those involved, that promotes collaboration among professionals within a state and between states, and that encourages individuals working in rural and remote areas to remain there.

Review of the Literature

Effective and efficient inservice training for educators is acknowledged in many recent national reports, books, and journals. Although professionals working with students who are deaf and hard of hearing are not identified in these materials, it is assumed that their professional growth is of equal value. Consequently, a brief review of this literature will provide a foundation for the regional inservice training model.

Staff Development: Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing: The field of the education of the deaf and hard of hearing has a long history of providing a variety of mechanisms for furthering the education of teachers and thereby, improving the education of deaf and hard of hearing students. Inservice education sponsored by state special schools, summer courses offered through teacher training programs in the education of deaf and hard of hearing, and special workshops have been the mainstay of those concerned with the continued education and development of teachers in this field.

Three outstanding staff development achievements in the field of deaf education are worth noting. The Convention of American Instructors of the Deaf, Inc. (C.A.I.D.) has served the profession on the national scene since the 1850s with bi-annual conventions. The famous summer institutes at Ball State University did much to assist administrators and teachers from residential schools for the deaf to deal with instructional and curricular issues of the late 1950s to the mid 1970s. The equally famous captioning institutes sponsored by the University of Nebraska advanced the working knowledge of these same types of individuals in matters relating to the implementation of technology in the 1960s through the 1980s. Each of these endeavors was successful because they targeted a specific purpose/need and provided quality training.

Staff Development: Research: The continuing education of teachers is not a new idea. Research on this topic is quite extensive (Henry, 1957; Griffin, 1983; and Joyce, 1990) and somewhat controversial. According to Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1990), some of the staff development research of the 1970s revealed that teachers were dissatisfied with inservice efforts. Fullan (1982) was more blunt when he stated that inservice activities were a failure. He listed seven reasons why such activities failed to change teacher practice:

* One-shot workshops were widespread, but ineffective.
* Topics were selected for people other than those for whom the inservice was intended.
* Follow-up support for ideas and practices did not occur.
* Follow-up evaluation did not occur.

* Inservice programs rarely addressed the participants' needs and concerns.
*Participants came from multiple schools and differences were not recognized.
* Inservice programs lacked any conceptual basis in planning and implementation.

In the 1980s, according to Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1990), the situation changed in that the educational community, researchers, and state legislatures realized that school programs and practices would not improve without some kind of staff development. Subsequent research involving the actual practice of staff development discovered that the staff development process could be made more effective if the following were achieved:

* Staff members have a common, coherent set of goals and objectives that they helped formulate, reflecting high expectations.
* Staff members participate as helpers of each other, offering demonstrations and feedback.
* Staff development organizers provide strong leadership, the norm of collegiality, promoting informal communication, and coordination without control.
* Staff development organizers place high priority on staff development and continuous improvement of personal skills, sharing job knowledge, and a norm of continuous improvement applicable to all.

According to Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1990) additional inquiries into the process of staff development and the identification of what constitutes effective staff development have resulted in a conceptualization that includes five staff development models. Stated briefly these models are as follows:

* **Individually Guided Staff Development**: a process through which teachers plan for and pursue activities they believe will promote their own learning.
* **Observation/Assessment Model:** a procedure that provides teachers with objective data and feedback regarding their classroom performance.
* **Developmental/Improvement Process:** a process that engages teachers in developing curriculum, designing programs, or engaging in a school-improvement process to solve general or particular problems.
* **Training Model**: a process that involves teachers in acquiring knowledge or skills through appropriate individual or group instruction.
* **Inquiry Model**: a process that requires teachers to identify an area of instructional interest, collect data, and make changes in their instruction on the basis of an interpretation of those data.

Of these models, the **Training Model** of staff development, with its well defined structure and delivery system, has received the most attention in practice and research.

Staff Development: Rural Research: Information on rural staff development is very limited. Miller and Hull (1991) in a study of rural professional isolation indicated that research on rural staff development was insufficient. They attributed this to the following factors:

* a majority of educational staff development research has focused on non-rural educational settings.
* inservice rural education has used "urban" staff development models that fail to meet the needs of rural school educators/districts.
* research needs to recognize rural school/community factors such as:
    ** multi-grade schools
    ** small school/district size
    ** limited financial and human resources
    ** geographic isolation

They also noted that if professional renewal programs were to be undertaken in rural areas, then certain guidelines should be followed. Their suggestions included the following:

* Staff development programs and activities should be based on clearly identified needs.
* Provisions should be available for long-term professional development.
* Rural educators need to try out new behaviors, exchange ideas, and receive helpful feedback in a supportive climate.

* Use incentives to motivate rural educators to seek professional growth.
* Rural educators need to be involved in the establishment of renewal goals.
* Rural administrators need to support renewal efforts.

As indicated by the authors, these suggestions provide a useful framework for developing a staff development program for rural educators.

Regional Inservice Training Model [RIST-M]

As indicated previously, the field of the education of the deaf and hard of hearing has provided professionals with various means of continuing their education. Unfortunately, some of these options no longer exist (i.e., Ball State University curriculum projects), or are in essence, national conventions and not staff development programs. While C.A.I.D. meetings offer relevant topics, meetings are typically not accessible to rural educators because of distance and costs. Furthermore, efforts that have been undertaken have not attempted to understand the process of staff development itself; that is, staff development in the education of the deaf and hard of hearing has not sought to inquire as to what makes for effective staff development within this field. As a result, there are workshops on a variety of topics relevant to educators of the deaf and hard of hearing, but no research is underway to investigate what constitutes an effective staff development program in this field.

In the absence of staff development research in the area of the education of the deaf and hard of hearing, and recognizing that improved student/school performance is linked to continuous teacher development, a need exists to develop a practical, efficient model of staff development that would be useable in diverse areas; rural and urban. Such an inservice training model for professionals working with students with hearing disabilities should have an underlying foundation that reflects recent research and quality practices. Such a conceptual framework is offered in Table 1. The framework's features, which underlie the proposed Regional Inservice Training Model (**RIST-M**), must assure that teachers, specialists, and others gain new knowledge derived from research and learn of promising practices that will enable them to enhance their own programs and services to deaf and hard of hearing students.

Table 1: Regional Inservice Training Model (Framework and factors)

Content	
	1. Identify and define needs
	2. Increased knowledge base
	3. Skill development
	4. Quality practices
Structure	
	1. Training Model
	2. Use of national speakers
	3. Use of regional peer presenters
Delivery	
	1. Cost efficient and program effective
	2. Geographic location
Support	
	1. OSEP/ISU/Intermountain States Partnership
	2. Incentives for growth and change

The Intermountain Special Study Institute

The inservice education model and, in particular, the model's framework was 'field tested' in the

summer of 1994 with the establishment of the Intermountain Special Study Institute [ISSI] at Idaho State University. In designing ISSI, attention was given to the model's four factors: Content, Structure, Delivery, and Support. The description of ISSI that follows will provide details concerning these factors. In addition, data pertaining to participants and outcomes are presented.

Description of ISSI: In the fall of 1993, faculty members of the graduate program in the education of deaf and hard of hearing students at Idaho State University, conferred with the state directors of special education and superintendents of special schools in the intermountain region about their respective inservice needs. As a result of this inquiry, a needs assessment survey was conducted among educators of the deaf and hard of hearing in the region. The results were tabulated and a program was designed to address four needs: (a) language development of children with hearing impairments; (b) deaf and hard of hearing children with learning disabilities; (c) teacher collaboration in rural areas; and (d) technology and learners with hearing disabilities.

In developing the program, which took place over a two month period (November-December, 1993), consideration was given to three decisions. The first dealt with the basic partnership that had evolved between ISU and five intermountain states as a result of previous collaborative efforts regarding the training of classroom teachers of the deaf. The second decision concerned the process of identifying and recruiting individuals actively involved in the education of deaf and hard of hearing students. With each of these decisions it was decided to involve state directors of special education and superintendents of special schools in the process of identifying, nominating, and selecting program participants. This decision not only used these individuals in an effective manner because they were more informed about their states' needs and resources, but strengthened the basic partnership between ISU and the five intermountain states. The final decision involved the development of an inservice training program that would meet the needs identified in the regional survey. This involved the design of a program that would utilize national speakers who would add to the knowledge base of participants, as well as regional presenters who would provide 'peer' presentations relating to quality, or best practices.

During the winter of 1993, the inservice regional program for professionals working with deaf and hard of hearing students was developed. Potential speakers were contacted and contracts negotiated. Prospective participants were notified and informed of the summer program and corresponding arrangements and costs. Arrangements were made with ISU to grant course credit for the program. Other details were addressed and attended to during this period.

On June 5,1994 the ISU summer program for professionals working with deaf and hard of hearing students started. Enrollment for the five day institute was 85 professionals representing teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and educational interpreters from Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming.

In designing the summer program, attention was given to scheduling presentations so that participants had an opportunity not only to receive information from national speakers but to discuss this information with colleagues. As such, the program allowed time for group discussions following each of the four major presentations. In each of these small group discussions, which included interpreters for deaf participants, individuals were able to explore the information presented from their own perspectives, as well as to exchange ideas as to how this new information/knowledge might be implemented in their respective situations. Additional time was scheduled so that individuals could establish informal networks among colleagues from other professions, from other school districts or special schools, or from other states within the region. It was critical that each factor, national speakers, peer presenters, and networking, be considered.

Characteristics of Institute Participants: Using the "Participant Profile" form, an instrument provided by the Educational Resource Centers on Deafness (ERCD) of Gallaudet University, Complete information was collected from seventy-one of the eighty-four participants attending the

Institute: however, some tables reflect higher numbers because of partially completed forms. The following tables display the distribution of participants on several dimensions, state by state.

Table 2: State Residence of Participant / Type of Community

State	ID	MT	NV	WY	UT	TOTALS
Number	34	21	4	6	6	71
Percentage	47.9	29.6	5.6	8.5	8.5	100%
Rural/Farm	7	5	1	2	3	18(22%)
Small Town	25	9	0	4	2	40(56%)
Suburban	2	0	0	0	0	2 (3%)
Urban	0	7	3	0	1	11(15%)

Table 3: Work Classifications [Participants could identify more than one area]

Classification	ID	MT	NV	WY	UT	TOTAL	PERCENT
Teacher	2	2	0	0	0	4	5.5%
Sp. Ed. Teacher	2	2	0	0	0	4	5.5%
Deaf Ed K-12	17	12	3	2	2	36	49.3%
Early Child.	1	0	0	0	0	1	1.4%
Post Sec.	1	0	0	0	0	1	1.4%
Consultant	1	0	0	1	1	3	4.1%
Prog. Dir.	0	1	0	2	2	5	6.8%
Admin.	0	2	0	0	0	2	2.7%
Sp. Therapy	2	3	0	0	1	6	8.2%
Audiology	4	0	0	0	0	4	5.5%
Parent Adv.	2	0	0	0	0	2	2.7%
Psychologist	0	0	1	0	0	1	1.4%
Counselor	1	0	0	0	0	1	1.4%
Interpreter	1	0	0	0	0	1	1.4%
Student	1	0	0	1	0	2	2.7%

Table 4: Type of Program [Participants could identify more than one type of employment]

Type of Program	ID	MT	NV	WY	UT	TOTALS
Public	4	2	0	0	5	11 (9.0%)
Private	1	0	0	0	0	1 (.8%)
Residential	14	10	0	0	3	27 (22.1%)
Day	2	2	0	1	3	8 (6.6%)
Outreach	1	0	0	0	0	1 (.8%)
Reg. Classes	9	9	2	1	2	23 (18.9%)
Resource Room	10	4	2	1	2	20 (16.4%)
Separate Classes	9	4	2	0	2	17 (13.9%)
Post. Sec.	2	0	0	0	0	2 (1.6%)
Agency	0	1	0	1	0	2 (1.6%)
Homebound	1	0	0	0	1	2 (1.6%)

As can be seen in Tables 2-4, participants were primarily from rural areas [ie., approximately 81% of the total attendance], they worked directly in instructional settings [ie., approximately 70%] and they worked in a variety of programs within either residential settings or public school settings.

Institute Evaluation: In addition to collecting information concerning characteristics of the participants, the Institute used a four point scale to evaluate program features. Tables 5 and 6 present important information relating to the model's content, structure, and delivery.

Table 5: Mean Scores for Presentations

	ID	MT	NV	WY	UT	OTHER	TOT.
Presentation A	3.7	4.0	3.3	3.3	3.8	4.0	3.8
Presentation B	3.7	3.2	4.0	3.6	3.7	4.0	3.5
Presentation C	3.2	3.6	2.5	3.6	3.7	3.5	3.4
Presentation D	3.3	3.3	3.7	3.3	3.7	3.6	3.4
Presentation E	3.0	3.7	3.0	3.5	3.2	3.8	3.3
Presentation F	2.5	3.1	3.0	2.3	2.6	2.8	2.7

Table 6: Program Activity Mean Score Evaluations

Program Activity	ID	MT	NV	WY	UT	OTHER	TOT.
Peer Presents	3.4	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.3	2.8	3.3
R. Table Discuss	2.7	3	3	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.8
Informal Network	3.0	3.0	2.0	4.0	3.0	2.0	3.2

Based upon a review of the information presented in the above tables, it can be concluded that ISSI was perceived as being very successful in certain areas, as well as being somewhat less successful in others. Five of the six presentations were rated very high, as were two of the three program activities. This positive perception on the part of participants was also expressed in two other areas: [1] networking opportunities and [2] Institute arrangements.

Observations

As a result of offering the special study institute, four preliminary observations can be made regarding regional inservice education for professionals working with deaf and hard of hearing students in the Intermountain West. Each of these observations will relate to a specific factor of the Regional Inservice Training Model.

Content: It is important that a needs assessment be conducted annually to determine what professionals working with deaf and hard of hearing students in the intermountain region consider to be current issues, concerns, and problems. Such an assessment should be done with the assistance of state directors of special education and superintendents of special schools. Results of a needs assessment survey would then determine what the content would be of the up-coming special study institute. Furthermore, results could then be compared to known data bases and thereby enhance the field's understanding of what occurs at the national, regional, and state levels with respect to rural deaf education. This information would provide affected parties (i.e., state directors of special education, superintendents of special schools, teacher educators, and others) with valuable information about surveying rural teacher populations, their needs, and the relationships of those needs to other known data bases.

Structure: Based upon a review of the institute's evaluations three observations can be offered. First, professionals working with students who are deaf and hard of hearing appreciate presenters who address relevant topics in a thorough manner and provide practical suggestions, strategies, and materials. In addition, they anticipate that presenters will be given sufficient time to develop and present their ideas. Second, these professionals indicated that time to network [ie., meet old/new colleagues, exchange ideas and in general deal with other matters] was critical. Finally, these professionals appreciated the supportive climate/culture of the institute. In general, the model's structure should reflect the institute's vision, mission, and values: that is, to provide a regional inservice education for professionals working with deaf and hard of hearing students in rural and remote areas.

Delivery: Locating the special study institute in the largest community in rural southeastern Idaho proved to be both cost effective and efficient. Pocatello's location made it possible for the institute to operate in a very cost effective manner because travel and lodging costs were kept to a minimum. As for being efficient, the institute utilized a facility that offered a number of features [ie., centralized, modern, accessible to people with disabilities, and sufficient meeting/conference space] that made it possible for participants to attend all meetings.

Support: The institute would not have occurred without the financial support and general assistance from state departments of education and special schools in the intermountain region, as well as from Gallaudet University, the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, and Idaho State University. Their support allowed the institute to provide incentives to professionals in rural areas to participate in a week long institute. From the inception of the regional inservice training model to the implementation of the special study institute, the agencies, schools, and institutions involved were informed and consulted about all matters concerning the process of furthering the education of professionals working with deaf and hard of hearing students in rural areas.

Conclusion

In developing an inservice program for professionals working with deaf and hard of hearing students in rural areas three factors must be considered if it is to be program effective and cost efficient. First, it must be regional in focus because a critical mass is needed to sustain a quality program. Furthermore, this should be a collaborative approach involving SDEs, LEAs, special schools, and institutions of higher education. Second, the training should be relevant to the needs of the professionals concerned and provide them with ample time and opportunity to interact. Finally, it should be of reasonable cost so that educators can afford to attend.

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